

Ethics & Philosophy, Table 1

Starting with a question about favorite texts, I went around the table, asking for insights. People pitched in nicely, and we ran out of time. We went in a number of directions, as you'll see.

In some instances, I'm not able to give attribution from my notes, as when we were talking about video resources. In that connection, at least one in the group suggested a class critique of Michael Moore's "Capitalism: A Love Story and The Commanding Heights" (a six-hour, PBS video series on the history of economics). In this general discussion, someone mentioned Niall Ferguson's "The Ascent of Money," and someone added J.P. Moreland's "Loving Your God With All Your Mind." We agreed that Hollywood often portrays businessmen as malevolent and that it would be good to have an annotated filmography of the range of movies hitting economic themes, fairly or unfairly.

Craig Mitchell, SWBTS

Recommends "Redeeming Economics" by John D. Muller; "Money, Greed, and God" by Jay Richards; "Economics in Christian Perspective" by Victor Claar and Robin Klay; "The Victory of Reason" by Rodney Stark.

He's generated some PowerPoints, including one on how economics began with moral philosophy. He shows how politics and economics have moved away from this, driven by "science envy."

He mentioned a Project Syndicate app on his iPhone and two videos on YouTube under "econstories."

He said we need to emphasize virtue and observed that 'capitalism' is a Marxist word.

Gifford Grobien, Concordia, Ft. Wayne

In his theological ethics course, he dedicates two days to economic ethics. He draws on "The Ethics of Martin Luther" by Paul Althaus and Robert Schulze, as well as on "Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire," by William Cavanaugh.

Daniel Churchwell, MBI, Seattle

Has a course titled "God, Wealth, and the Church." He said they used one of Paul Heyne's books as a text.

Recommends "Neither Poverty Nor Riches" by Craig Blomberg. (Several in the group said they were not Blomberg fans, referencing a disappointing presentation at the Evangelical Theological Society). He also spoke highly of Ken Elzinga at the University of Virginia.

In our discussion of the tendency of "young evangelicals" to distance themselves from the abortion and homosexual disputes and to embrace "cooler" causes such as "social justice" and the environment, he said they "had no economics." He also observed that focus on economics can elicit charges of preaching a social gospel.

Joe Woddell, Criswell College

Recommends “Money, Greed, and God” by Jay Richards; “Basic Economics” by Thomas Sowell; “The Road to Serfdom” by Friedrich von Hayek.

Ken Magnuson, SBTS

Recommends the Muller book (*Redeeming Economics*), which he used in a recent colloquium; “Common Sense Economics” by James Gwartney, et al; “Economics in One Lesson” by Henry Hazlitt.

He said that, just as bioethics must be continually updated to deal with new technologies, economic ethics must accommodate the fact that we’re no longer dealing with subsistence living.

Scott Rae, Biola/Talbot

He urged that we keep asking the question, “How does it touch the life of the church?”

He noted that the Bible also teaches generosity.

Robert Stewart, NOBTS

He spoke of pastoring a poor church in New Orleans (“no collar,” aspiring to “blue collar”), where his people were interested in “getting a foothold” and in “how to manage meager incomes.” They were prey for Joel Osteen and suspicious of how the middle class holds on to what it has. If he addresses finances, he can be criticized for merely serving “felt needs” rather than deeper spiritual things.

Dieumeme Noelliste, Denver Seminary

He observed that the issue was how to translate the Bible into our times, and he expressed skepticism over “trickle-down” economics.

Joe Gorra, *Philosophia Christi* editor

He spoke on the importance of contextualization.

Mark Coppenger, SBTS

I told them about a just-completed doctoral seminar where, in addition to a survey anthology by Solomon and Murphy, I assigned liberal texts as basis for critique. I drew on my own conservative book on justice (published in 1983, now being rewritten) to lead the attack on much of what we read in these assigned texts: M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, C. Castaneda, H. Hackman, M. Peters, and X. Zuniga, “Readings for Diversity and Social Justice,” Second Edition (Routledge); Brian Barry, “Why Social Justice Matters” (Polity); Julie Clawson, “Everyday Justice” (IVP); Devin Kumashiro, “Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice” (Routledge); B. McLaren, E. Padilla, and A. Seeber, editors, “The Justice Project” (Baker); J. Milburn Thompson, “Introducing Catholic Social Thought” (Orbis).

I suggested that we needed to urge preachers not to “proof text” bad counsel, such as they did in Britain, where they used the “had all things in common” text to support the rise of the welfare state; and today, where they use admonitions to care for the “stranger and sojourner” to dismiss the rule of law re immigration.

I suggested that we could use economic stories as sermon illustrations, such as when I speak of the way in which those converted in the hillside slums of Rio often move to better neighborhoods, simply because they have a new heart, one which enables/prompts them to hold a job, not throw away their substance on drink, and to treat the family with kindness.